



# COMMUNICATING ACROSS GEORGIA

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## Key Dates to Remember

### October 27, 2006

Technical Acceptance of Mobile Communications Units

### Fall 2006

Initiation of Phase II implementation of 36 additional PSAP sites for state

### March 2007

Completion of Phase I implementation of 68 public safety answering point (PSAP) systems

For more information or if you'd like a presentation for your organization, contact program director Dan Brown at [dbrown@gema.state.ga.us](mailto:dbrown@gema.state.ga.us).

## Rollout for Georgia interoperable communication system underway

Georgia has made rapid progress in deploying the technical infrastructure for its new statewide interoperable communications system. With federal funds from the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program (LETPP), the state is installing a Motorola gateway system that will let local governments have interoperable communications over a private network, regardless of the kind of communication equipment they use.

The network will link police and first responders through public safety answering point (PSAP) systems now being installed in 68 Georgia counties. The current phase of the communications infrastructure build-out will be completed and ready for operation by March 2007. A second phase of the build-out will place PSAPs in an additional 36 counties. *See map showing planned installations on page 2.*

In the Georgia gateway system, each PSAP will be installed at a single dispatch location. The PSAPs will allow dispatchers to see incoming calls depicted as icons on their console screens. They will be able to connect callers by dragging one of these icons on top of the other.

Motorola Corporation has implemented the MOTOBRIDGE gateway solution requested by Georgia. The Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) provided the system design and is assisting in implementation and technical acceptance. Through October 2006, the project team has:

- Conducted production kickoff meetings in 67 Georgia counties to introduce local officials to the interoperable communications gateway system and to make site surveys that determine local requirements;
- Facilitated custom workshops in 59 counties that allowed local officials to design their particular applications of the PSAP system;
- Reviewed Motorola's detailed design and cost proposals for 49 counties and made PSAP system recommendations for 39 of the installations; and

***Through October 2006, the state conducted kickoff meetings in 67 counties, production workshops in 59 counties, and supervised installations of six county sites, two of which have been certified.***

- Assisted 24 counties in reaching final decisions for system installations.

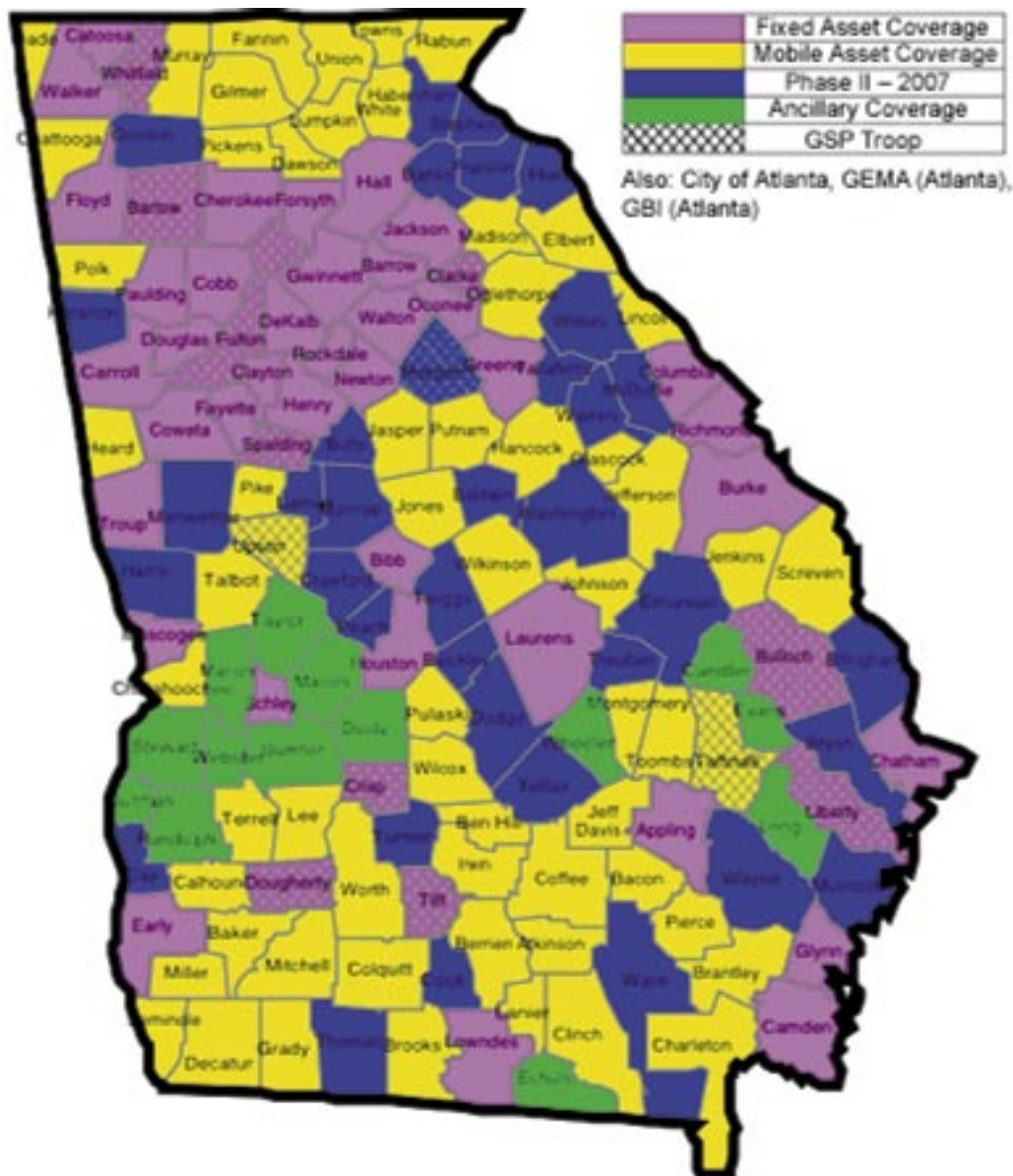
“Each county is getting a custom-designed system, based on requirements provided by their local public safety agencies,” said Dr. Douglas Cobb, GTRI project technical director.

Cobb said that the 68-site first phase is covering the state’s primary population centers and most of its main transportation corridors. He added that the 36 sites in the second phase of the PSAP implementation will cover as much of the remaining state population as possible and fill out coverage along the most heavily traveled Georgia highways.

Future plans call for deployment of PSAPs in all 159 Georgia counties, based on the availability of funding.

Areas of the state not reached by the PSAP deployments will receive coverage from two mobile communications units (MCUs). These MCUs should be able to reach any location in Georgia with an emergency in several hours, Cobb said. *An in-depth story on the MCUs is on page 3 of this issue.*

## Planned Georgia Interoperable Communication System Rollout



## Rural areas to benefit from rolling infrastructure

Local police and responders in isolated areas of Georgia won't have to worry about communicating with their counterparts in other jurisdictions during emergencies.

As part of its statewide interoperable communications network, the state is deploying two mobile communications units (MCUs), vans that will serve as interoperable solutions and portable infrastructures on wheels during major incident responses.

One of the MCUs will be located in Cobb County, while the other will be located in Wayne County. In this way, one of them should be able to reach the site of any emergency incident in Georgia and begin operations within several hours of the initial call for help, says Dan Brown, LETPP program manager at the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA).

The Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) is overseeing the rollout of the statewide interoperable communications system, and GTRI technical project director Dr. Douglas Cobb said that the MCUs will be useful in two basic types of situations.

"The MCUs have even more capability than the PSAPs with their satellite connectivity for linking up response agency calls," Cobb said. "They're best suited for long events, not police chases."

The satellite connectivity of these units will allow dispatch operators assigned to them to link a variety of self-contained radio communications assets, such as amateur radio, VHF, UHF, 800 MHz, trunked and conventional systems, with other radio systems via the state's Internet network.

The units have been purchased and outfitted. The state's project vendor, Motorola, is now working with another company to implement the MCUs' satellite connectivity.



**Top:** shown here is one of Georgia's two mobile communications units. **Middle:** GTRI engineers check out an antenna installation. **Bottom:** a Motorola engineer reviews the equipment inside the MCU with local public safety clients.



# What the LETPP program offers local public safety agencies

The state's interoperable communications rollout is providing Georgia counties with a variety of concrete benefits. To begin with, the LETPP-funded program is establishing a technical infrastructure that will allow local law enforcement and responders throughout the state to talk to each other over the Motorola gateway system without having to buy new communications equipment. Counties selected to participate in the rollout are receiving one public safety answering point (PSAP) and one mutual aid VHF radio unit. The total investment that each participating county will receive in PSAP equipment, common system equipment, and common services is worth \$132,000.

In addition, the state is providing each participating county with technical assistance from the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) to link up with the state gateway system network. In kickoff meetings for each county, GTRI engineers explain how the state communications infrastructure works and survey local communication resources. In follow-up design workshops, they are working with local officials to develop solutions reflecting county needs and resources.

"Each county has a different configuration of resources calling for a custom solution," said Dr. Douglas Cobb, director of the GTRI team. "We look at the county's radio assets and have county representatives tell us how they want to interface them to the gateway system. The counties select what they can afford to do with our assistance." The net result, said Cobb, is that counties will get plans to guide future investments in interoperable communications even if they don't choose to buy these systems right away.

GTRI engineers guide local officials through a process to determine the agencies that can be linked immediately to the state network and that channels that they require for working with adjacent counties. By working closely with GTRI, counties get technical roadmaps that tell them how to make enhancements in future years and provide cost estimates for these improvements.

## ***How Athens-Clarke has taken advantage of the LETPP***

The state's gateway solution is providing each participating county \$132,000 in equipment and technical assistance services for improving local interoperable communications. To take full advantage of the new infrastructure, however, local governments must make additional investments in new equipment.

A case in point is Athens-Clarke County, which has used general funds from its police department to buy five new VHF radios, one 800 MHz radio, and two connections to the central electronic bank.

Athens-Clarke County has a stand-alone 800 MHz radio communications system for public safety, while the adjacent counties all have VHF systems, said Howell McKinnon, 800 MHz Coordinator for Athens-Clarke's Department of Central Services. According to McKinnon, the purchase of additional VHF radios will allow Athens-Clarke County to maintain simultaneous communication with their counterparts in surrounding counties during a public safety incident.

"This opens communications with adjacent counties," he says. "In the past we've had mutual aid agreements with other counties, but they don't do much good when you operate on disparate radio systems."

***To take full advantage of the new gateway system, local governments have opportunities to make additional investments in communications equipment.***